

MEMORANDUM

February 24, 1953

TO: Mr. Nelson C. Jackson, Director
Community Services

FROM: Roy E. Morris
Field Representative

SUBJ: Field Trip to Philadelphia, Pa., February 16-18, 1953.

Purpose of Visit:

To interview and advise persons interested in securing jobs at the United States Steel Company's Fairless Works.

Background Information:

A news release from the National Urban League appeared in the two Philadelphia Negro papers - the PHILADELPHIA TRIBUNE and the PHILADELPHIA INDEPENDENT - and in the Philadelphia-New Jersey edition of the AFRO-AMERICAN and the PITTSBURGH COURIER. (See attached copy from the Philadelphia Tribune.)

The release invited persons interested in securing jobs at the United States Steel Company's Fairless Works plant, to see a staff representative of the National Urban League who would be available at the offices of the Philadelphia Urban League on February 16, 17, and 18.

This plan grew out of the meeting of the NUL Board-staff committee on Buck's County on January 30.

Problems Presented:

The interviews were encouraged because of need to be in touch with likely prospects for higher-level jobs and/or future upgrading in jobs at Fairless Works. Mr. Hopkins, Executive Director of the Philadelphia Urban League, reported to me that a number of telephone calls came into his office asking about Fairless Works jobs as mentioned in the release. He said these calls began coming a full week before the NUL staff representative was due there.

Action Taken:

Twenty-four interviews were held during the three-day visit. A large number of telephone calls were made into the office by people who could not come in. At least six letters were received, also, asking for information. Two of these letters were handed to me.

Twenty of the persons were males, four were females. Average schooling was 10th grade, ranging from completion of 6th grade to completion of 2 years of college work. Average age was 30-35; ages of males ranged from 18 to 50; for females, from 21 to 32. All but four were married. All but one gave a Philadelphia address. Fourteen had some sort of industrial skill; all twenty-four had some work experience, including 8 who had had only unskilled jobs. Four of the twenty-four had had some special industrial training.

Vocational counseling was required for most of those interviewed. Three persons were referred to the Industrial Secretary of the Philadelphia Urban League as representing special cases deserving Philadelphia Urban League effort, in terms of jobs within Philadelphia.

Twenty-one persons were advised to go to Fairless Works to begin or to renew the process of completing application for jobs there. Three of them had mailed or left application at the plant as long as 12 months ago, but had never had any response. Each person was asked to advise me regarding any communication from Fairless Works, and results. I told each person that he or she should hear from the NUL after six weeks to two months. I explained that the NUL wanted a close follow-up on Negro applications, their disposition and any possibilities for upgrading or white-collar jobs at Fairless Works.

Background material was secured from each person interviewed and is available in the NUL files.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

Only two of the twenty-four seen were good prospects for our efforts to secure for Negroes opportunities to hold white-collar and better-than-the-usual jobs offered to Negroes. Apparently, for each full day of such counselling interviews as were those reported on here, only one or two good prospects can be found.

If a similar news release is given in the future, some mention should be made of the preference for high school graduates - though without excluding equally capable persons who are not high school graduates.

I should like to recommend, also, that two or three days of interviews be developed at least in Trenton, N. J. Letters asking for information, based on the news release for Philadelphia, came from Baltimore and as far away as Alabama. Trenton is nearer Fairless Works than Philadelphia, and will be the principal site of housing for Negroes working at the plant and should have a channeling of local Negro Fairless Works job interest.
